

## A Secular Age beyond the West

This book traces the experiences of religion and secularity in eleven countries not primarily shaped by Western Christianity (Japan, China, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and Morocco), and examines how the status of religion and the emergence of secularity have evolved in the course of the 20th century in these societies. All chapters do so in conversation with Charles Taylor's grand narrative of the North Atlantic World in his *A Secular Age* (2007). The case studies indicate that in all eleven cases, the state – building on colonial and imperial legacies – highly determines religious experience, by variably regulating religious belief, practice, property, education, and/or law. The book identifies the major critical junctures and path dependencies that have led to the different levels and modes of state regulation of religion and discusses the consequences of these for the possible emergence of something approaching Taylor's core condition of secularity – namely, the social acceptance of open religious unbelief and switching between religious affiliations (Secularity III).

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The most enduring and illuminating bodies of late nineteenth-century social theory – by Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others – emphasized the integration of religion, polity, and economy through time and place. Once a staple of classic social theory, however, religion gradually lost the interest of many social scientists during the twentieth century. The recent emergence of phenomena such as Solidarity in Poland, the dissolution of the Soviet empire, various South American, Southern African, and South Asian liberation movements, the Christian Right in the United States, and Al Qaeda have reawakened scholarly interest in religiously based political conflict. At the same time, fundamental questions are once again being asked about the role of religion in stable political regimes, public policies, and constitutional orders. The series *Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics* will produce volumes that study religion and politics by drawing upon classic social theory and more recent social scientific research traditions. Books in the series offer theoretically grounded, comparative, empirical studies that raise “big” questions about a timely subject that has long engaged the best minds in social science.

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**A Secular Age beyond the West: Religion, Law  
and the State in Asia, the Middle East  
and North Africa**

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*Alfred C. Stepan (1936 to 2017): inspired teacher,  
scholar, and friend*

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## Preface

The inspiration for this book was born on a warm autumn day in the guesthouse of Boğaziçi University, in the early 2010s, where, overlooking the Bosphorus, many of the authors assembled, and other friends and colleagues gathered to discuss books that deeply stirred them and to which they wished to formulate a response. The group, made up mostly of sociologists and political scientists working on the nexus between politics, religion, and law, each an expert on a different country of the Middle East and Asia, soon settled on Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, a book that offers manifold entry points and intellectual foils to argue with and against, a book which with each reading takes on a new colour and evokes new imagery and insights. The path of working on this book together soon became an endpoint in itself, as the group grew closer and many of its members met again summer after summer in different constellations, working on new projects as this one came to completion, and with subsets of its members crafting new cooperations in research, publishing, and joint teaching. As editors we are deeply grateful for this gift of companionship, both with one another and the wider group of fellow-travelers, creating a net of interlocutors with whom it was a pleasure and honor to agree and disagree, to understand and to occasionally misunderstand. Thus, over time, these intellectual companions became companions also of the heart, and we hope the group will live on in its various manifestations for many years to come.

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Princeton University's Center for the Study of Religion generously funded a retreat at the International Institute for the Sociology of Law (IISJ) in Oñati, Spain, where draft chapters were first presented. We thank the center and Robert Wuthnow for its support, and the IISJ for having offered an idyllic conference venue in one of the oldest universities on the Iberian peninsula. We thank Charles Taylor for having given us the opportunity to present some of our draft chapters at a conference he convened at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna in June 2014. John Bowen, Craig Calhoun, Bernice Martin, David Martin, Michael Warner, and Charles Taylor generously offered comments and ideas that sharpened our ways of thinking about the relationship between Secularities I and III.

Finally, we thank Lew Bateman for supporting this project from the beginning and Sara Doskow for having seen it through. Anonymous readers and the series editors, Kenneth Wald, Richard Wood, and David Leege, asked compelling questions which forced us to re-think and re-draft. Helen Belgian-Cooper completed a superb job as copy-editor, and Velmurugan Inbasigamoni and Thomas Haynes were reliable contacts at the press for whose support and ideas we are deeply grateful.

The meaning of religion and non-religion and the sociocultural, economic and political consequences that flow from it remain at the core of intellectual quests both in the social sciences and humanities. We thank Charles Taylor for having nudged us into the conversation.

*Mirjam Künkler, John Madeley, and Shylashri Shankar,  
September 2015*